



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 August 2024

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/24/3342611

Long Copse, The Street, West Clandon, Surrey GU4 7ST

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs James Phillips against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 24/P/00125.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of a single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a single storey side extension at Long Copse, The Street, West Clandon, Surrey GU4 7ST in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/P/00125 and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: - LCAJP/COL1.1A, LCAJP/COL1.2A, LCAJP/COL1.3A, LCAJP/COL1.4A, LCAJP/COL1.5A, and LCAJP/COL1.6A.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are: -
 - whether or not the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
 - if inappropriate development, the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
 - if the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the 'very special circumstances' which would be necessary to justify it.

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that development within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of the specified exceptions applies. Exception (c), as set out in paragraph 154 of the Framework, allows for the extension and alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
4. Policy P2 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034 (Local Plan) requires the approach in the Framework to be applied, and the Council consider the proposed extension in combination with previous development would constitute disproportionate additions.
5. Long Copse has benefited from several extensions. The Council's undisputed calculations are that the original floor area of the building was 169 sqm and that the existing property with extensions is 317 sqm, equating to an 87.9% increase in floor area. The proposed extension is small, 4.3 sqm, but, together with the previous extensions, the totality of the additions to the original building would increase to 90.4%.
6. Neither the Framework nor Local Plan policy P2 provide a definition of disproportionate additions, and therefore the assessment is a matter of planning judgement. The calculations above do not take into account other aspects of size which has an associated volume, nonetheless, at 90% the cumulative increase in floor area, cannot be considered as anything other than disproportionate. As such, the proposed extensions would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary to paragraph 154 of the Framework and Policy P2 of the Local Plan. Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the Framework state that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and that substantial weight should be given to any such harm.

Openness

7. Openness is one of the essential characteristics of the Green Belt. Set within a large plot with a gated entrance from the road, Long Copse is part of a row of large, detached properties to the western side of The Street forming part of Clandon village. The property is currently being renovated and the implemented alterations have given the property a very different appearance to that shown on the application plans with a coordinated and modern design.
8. To the extent that the footprint of the property would increase there would be a change in spatial terms. Nevertheless, the extension, extending an existing single-storey element to the side of the house, would be very modest. The sympathetic design and siting of the proposed extension would have no perceptible effect on the appeal site or its surroundings. Set back from The Street and with a gated entrance the existing single-storey element cannot be readily seen from the road. Whilst the proposal would increase its size, it would not increase its prominence or the visual presence of this element.
9. The proposed extension would not conflict with any of the Green Belt purposes listed in the Framework and the visual and spatial effect on the wider openness of the Green Belt would be negligible. I therefore find that there would be no harm to openness.

Other Considerations

10. The appellant explains that a porch could be added under permitted development rights (PD) and indicates this would be built as a fallback. I have no reason to doubt that there is a real prospect that this could happen and with a maximum floor area of 3 sqm the difference between a porch and the proposed extension would only be 1.3 sqm. In my view, the difference in floor area is of a de minimis scale, both in terms of the size of the existing and the original building.
11. Visually, the effect on the appearance and massing of the substantial house from a small extension or a porch to the side would be very similar and the increase in the width of the frontage would be the same. However, the dimensions of the appeal proposal would fully align with the existing side projection, creating a continuous and matching form that reflects the property's style. In contrast, from the diagrams provided by the appellant, and the dimensional limitations of a porch under PD, such an element would appear more as an add-on and be more visually identifiable as a further addition.
12. While the Council raise concerns that permitted development rights would remain, and therefore further development could take place, such provisions are not restricted in the Green Belt. There is, therefore, a degree of permissible development and incursion to the Green Belt. The property has already substantially increased in size through approved extensions and permitted development rights, nonetheless, there are no restrictions under PD for a porch in relation to other development, and the Planning Policy Guidance advises that PD rights should only be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances.
13. Reference is also made to another planning permission (Council reference 23/P/01473) for a single-storey rear extension following the demolition of an existing sunroom which was not included in the Council's floor area calculation as it had not been implemented. Whilst this would add another 15.6 sqm and increase the property further it does not alter my conclusions with regards to inappropriate development or the effects of the appeal proposal.
14. The Council, including the conservation officer who was consulted on the planning application, raised no objections to the extension's design and considered that it would preserve the Conservation Area. I agree with this assessment however this is a neutral factor.

Planning Balance

15. The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and, in accordance with the Framework, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. The harm is definitional, derived from the cumulative impact of previous development and there would be a spatial change. However, the extension on its own is of a very limited size, sympathetic in design and would have no perceptible visual effect on the appeal site, surrounding area or the openness of the Green Belt. In addition, the fallback, to which I give significant weight, would have a very similar effect, the difference in size would be negligible but the extension would integrate better with the existing property.
16. I find that in combination these other considerations are of sufficient weight in this case to clearly outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. Consequently, very special circumstances exist to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Although there would be conflict

with the development plan in respect of the cumulative impact of development, the proposal itself is very modest and would not have a material effect on the existing property or the Green Belt. As such the balance of planning considerations in this case leads me to the view that the appeal should succeed.

Conditions

17. I have imposed the standard time limit condition and a condition requiring development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, to provide certainty. I also find that a condition requiring the proposed materials to match those set out in the application is needed in the interests of the appearance of the dwelling and wider area.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons and considering all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR